

Marine Corps Aviation

Discussion

The mission of Marine Corps aviation is to provide the MAGTF commander with an Aviation Combat Element (ACE) capable of conducting air operations in support of the seizure and defense of advanced Naval bases, and conducting such land operations as may be directed by the Joint Force commander. The ACE supports the MAGTF through the six functions of Marine aviation: assault support; anti-air warfare; offensive air support; electronic warfare; control of aircraft and missiles; and aerial reconnaissance. The ACE can organize at any level from entire air wings to small detachments to fulfill the needs of the MAGTF. When combined, ACE assets create scalable, responsive, and highly versatile forces capable of supporting the full range of MAGTF and Joint operations.

The unique expeditionary and adaptable nature of Marine aviation allows it to operate effectively across the full spectrum of basing options. The ACE's ability to self-deploy and operate from austere forward operating bases, expeditionary airfields, amphibious platforms, and aircraft carriers makes it an adaptable, highly responsive, and lethal force.



Fully integrated aviation support is a key enabler that provides the ACE and MAGTF with tactical flexibility to support a variety of operational scenarios. The Marine Wing Support Groups (MWSG) and Marine Aviation Logistics Squadrons (MALS) provide sustainability to the ACE through numerous strategic, operational, and tactically optimized aviation logistics and support programs. The MWSG and subordinate Marine Wing Support Squadrons (MWSS) provide all essential aviation ground support requirements necessary to support any level of MAGTF from Forward Arming and Refueling Points (FARPs) to established Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). Examples of service support include security/force protection, messing, crash fire rescue, meteorological support and airfield construction. MALS provide the ACE with supply and intermediate level maintenance support. MALS also provide scalable detachments, based on the requirements and type of aircraft deployed, with the flexibility of supporting

the ACE either from an Aviation Logistics Support Ship (TAVB) or from ashore. These unique and innovative logistics support organizations provide Marine aviation with its expeditionary character and facilitate the ACE's responsive support to the MAGTF in any environment.

Marine Air Control Groups (MACG) provide the ACE commander with the Marine Air Command and Control System (MACCS) agencies to exercise command and control of aviation assets necessary to support MAGTF operations. The MACCS consists of various air command and control agencies designed to provide the ACE commander with the ability to plan, supervise, and influence the application of the six functions of Marine Aviation. The MACG is responsible for providing, operating, and maintaining the principal MACCS agencies, Joint, multinational, and civil air command and control systems.

The ability of Marine Tactical Aviation (TacAir) to integrate with, and reinforce, naval operations is well documented. Marine squadrons deployed aboard aircraft carriers in World War II, the Korean War, and during Vietnam. Today, four Marine F/A-18 squadrons are integrated with Navy carrier air wing deployments and most MEU(SOC)s include a complement of AV-8Bs aboard ship and KC-130s based at various strategic locations. Marine



squadrons operating as part of Navy carrier air wings or off amphibious ships have recently participated in operations such as Operation: Allied Force, Northern and Southern Watch, Deny Flight, Deliberate Force, Silver Wake, and Noble Anvil. Marine aviation assets not assigned to support shipboard deployments continue to maintain the capability to do so.

During the early days of Operation Nobel Anvil, Marine Aviation responded with TACAIR assets within 48 hours of the deployment order. Operating from two air bases in Italy, austere airfields in Taszar, Hungary, and from amphibious ships, fixed-wing aircraft commenced combat operations within days of arrival into the EUCOM area of responsibility. EA-6B assets supported Joint Task Force (JTF) operations from bases in Italy and provided over 30 percent of the total electronic warfare assets in theater. The capability to task organize and deploy assets aboard ships or to expeditionary land bases anywhere in the world within 72 hours provides the MAGTF with the ability to project a tremendously lethal, adaptable, and responsive aviation element in response to any challenge.



Marine Aviation Assault Support assets contribute significantly to the success of the MAGTF. Rotary-wing aircraft and KC-130s provide the MAGTF with transportation, in-flight and rapid ground re-fueling, assault support, and offensive air support. In 1996, demonstrating flexibility, scalability, and our expeditionary nature, the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and MEU(SOC) reorganized their forces in anticipation of conducting

multiple Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) thousands of miles apart in Albania and Zaire. Within a period of two weeks, this MAGTF split, transited, planned, and conducted final preparations for NEOs in both locations. The LPD and LSD remained in the Mediterranean, conducted the NEO in Albania, and then proceeded to Puerto Rico where they rejoined the LHA returning from Zaire and reassembled the MEU MAGTF. Once reassembled, the ARG/MEU(SOC) continued with the remainder of their deployment. This splitting of the MEU's resources, rescaling into smaller MAGTFs and covering multiple operations, demonstrates the flexibility and responsiveness of the MEU and Marine aviation. More recently, Marine Corps participation in Kosovo revalidated the MAGTF and aviation's ability to task-organize and project an adaptable and credible warfighting capability. Marine Corps rotary-wing aircraft, while forward deployed at sea and operating from a FOB ashore, supported Operations Joint Guardian and Shining Hope by conducting missions that ranged from humanitarian assistance to close air support.

Marine aviation has been, and will continue to be, ready to deploy a scalable, highly trained, task organized expeditionary ACE capable of conducting missions across the continuum of conflict in support of the MAGTF in either Joint or coalition environments. In a world of diminishing host nation support and basing options, the ability to provide the National Command Authorities (NCA) with self-contained Marine Air-Ground Task Forces, capable of executing a wide range of missions at a moments notice while operating from a variety of locations, will remain the Marine Corps' forte.

Marine Corps Position

The Marine Corps brings unique capabilities to the battlefield which, when integrated under Joint doctrine, improves Service interoperability and overall warfighting effectiveness. Providing a capable ACE to the MAGTF commander remains the primary mission of Marine aviation. Units scheduled in support of the MAGTF will continue to train to a level of proficiency that satisfies the requirements of the MAGTF commander.